

I have been flying tours on the Big Island since 1998 under SFAR environment. Flying tours is not easy task. We have to make sure passengers are comfortable and above all we have to make sure a safety of Passengers. However because of SFAR, which put us into more stress and unsafe situations.

Here are some of the examples:

1) Congestion

Since we have 1500 ft altitude limitation that will put us up to fix wing traffic altitude.

It is already congested with helicopter traffics at certain location but since helicopters are pushed up to 1500 ft so now it get even worse. We have helicopter and fix wing traffic flying same altitude. Which could cause midair.

I used to think how to fly the helicopters as a CFI. Helicopters usually stay 500ft and 1000ft for fix wing in traffic pattern so we can have vertical separation. (So at least CFI did not have to worry too much about fix wing flow.) Flying the tours in Hawaii with 1500ft, sharing same airspace with fix wing is really unsafe and put more workloads to all pilots, both helicopter and fix wing pilots.

(We are not only dealing with slow C172, there are some fast-moving twins, too.) I have heard close calls for mid-air between helicopter and fix-wing quite bit.

2) Altitude

I really can not understand why the helicopters in Hawaii have to fly high altitude even we have great forced landing spots (Cane field, Ranch, Forest, flat lava field, and etc.). Over those area, most of the case we do not have to even worry about the noise issue, but still have to fly high.

3) Raw terrain distance

With Hawaii's strong trade wind days, there is situations that pilots want to avoid flying middle of the valley to stay away from rough air. Some times it is much smoother and much safer flying along the sides of valley, but we lose those great options because of SFAR.

There are some good thing about SFAR, too. For example, "Helicopter Floatation Equipment" (Section 3)

which we learned from the accident and improved the safety. "Helicopter Operating Limitations"

(Section 5) is another good thing, even though this is a commonsense for the helicopter pilots.

As a one of tour helicopter pilot from Hawaii who want to continue to fly safely tour, I KNOW

"It is the time to make a better and safer SFAR"